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SUBJECT: MINDEF QADIR WELCOMES AMBASSADOR BACK TO IRAQ

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: On April 3, Minister of Defense Abdul Qadir Mohammed Jasim Al Mufriji hosted a dinner to welcome the Ambassador back to Iraq. Abdul Qadir introduced his key military leaders; provided a briefing on the status of the ministry; and stressed his commitment to sustaining a military loyal to Iraq and capable of protecting all Iraqis. The Ambassador assured Abdul Qadir of our continued commitment to Iraq's success. In response to the Ambassador's question on Foreign Military Sales progress, Abdul Qadir assured him that he viewed FMS as a critical tool to ensure efficient and accountable procurement. Abdul Qadir and his team devoted the dinner to tales under Saddam exposing the dictator's ruthlessness, his ill-equipped forces, and tendency toward exaggeration of strength. END SUMMARY.

MOD Overall

12. (C) Abdul Qadir painted a picture of the overall development of the Ministry and its forces. He said there were over 160,000 'trained and equipped' Iraqi soldiers deployed throughout Iraq. He cited their service under operation 'Law and order' as evidence of their advanced capabilities and willingness to deploy to Baghdad. General Babakir Zebari said by 2010, the Iraqi armed forces will include an army of 263,000 soldiers, an air force of 8000 personnel, and a navy of 2,500. Abdul Qadir speculated the Iraqi army combined with the increasingly capable air force, navy and special forces will one day be equal to other armed forces in the region. Abdul Qadir said the greatest challenge currently was establishing a strong logistics and training system to sustain the planned force. Abdul Qadir stressed the necessity of 'winning Baghdad' this time, eliminating terrorism, and developing a ministry committed to protecting all Iraqi citizens and its unified, democratic state. Babakir conveyed optimism that the 'crisis' at this time was transitory and the Iraqis were 'awakening' to the importance of a stable, unified Iraq. As an example, of this changing dynamic he pointed to the increasing political participation in the West and the rising numbers in Al Anbari men lining up to join the army.

Iraqi Ground Force Command (IGFC)

13. (C) The Iraqi Ground Force Control Commander, General Ali Ghaidan discussed the increasing effectiveness and responsibility of the IGFC. In only eighteen months, his team with MNF-I support had built a centralized operational command center, a 24-hour facility is staffed by 250 officers.

Iraqi Air Force

¶4. (C) The Iraqi Air Force Commander, General Kamal Barzanchi said the air force was developing well. His force now has three types of aircraft including; long-wing planes for transport and reconnaissance; cargo planes for personnel and resources movement, and helicopters for rescue, reconnaissance, transport, and support for ground forces. He said, thanks to the United States, the UK and other friends, the pool of trained pilots is growing.

MOD Intelligence

¶5. (C) MOD Director General for Intelligence and Security, Major General Jalal Selman said the MOD intelligence unit was critical to the overall war effort. He said, as with the overall ministry and force, the intelligence body was created from scratch in June 2004. He said there were very few Iraqi intel officers eligible for hire with the disbanding and de-ba'ath policies. However, with proper training and a concentrated effort, they have developed a capable team. Jalal said there are currently MOD intel officers in every division and in each province. He stressed that there was a high level of coordination and sharing across the intelligence agencies and relevant senior Iraqi leaders. He said this would only increase with the planned secure communication system that was being installed by the end of the year.

Qadir Advocate of Foreign Military Sales Program

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¶6. (C) Abdul Qadir said he is pleased with the GOI's recent approval of foreign military sales (FMS) program. He said he is already receiving FMS- procured equipment including M4 rifles and U.S. helicopters. Abdul Qadir agreed deliveries of FMS can take time but it seemed worth the wait. Using FMS, he stressed, eliminates the risk of corruption and ensures quality equipment. He also pointed to the training component that is included in FMS packages as valuable.

The Days Under Saddam

¶7. (C) Abdul Qadir and Babakir recounted stories from their days living under Saddam's regime. Abdul Qadir told how he rose to the rank of Lieutenant General in Saddam's army but was dismissed and jailed in 1992 for openly opposing the Kuwait war. Both he and Babakir discussed the poor quality of equipment Saddam provided his forces. As a result, they suffered thousands of casualties in the Iran-Iraq war and virtually all their military hardware was destroyed by the U.S. during Operation Desert Storm. Both described Saddam's ruthless behavior and his propensity for exaggeration. As to the latter, Babakir recalled that when the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, Saddam brushed aside the threat by stating he knew seven million fadayeens ready to die for Iraq.

¶8. (SBU) MinDef Abdul Qadir hosted a dinner on April 3 for the Ambassador. Other attendees included:

- Chief of Staff, Iraqi Joint Forces, General Babakir Zebari
- Iraqi Ground Force Control Commander, General Ali Ghaidan
- Iraqi Air Force Commander, General Kamal Barzanchi
- MOD Director General for Intelligence and Security, Major General Jalal Selman
- MOD General Secretary, Major Salih Sarhan
- Deputy Chief of Mission, Daniel Speckhard
- A/Political-Military Counselor Apar Sidhu

